



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Ricardo Lara (323) 225-4545

DE LEÓN LEGISLATION TO GUARANTEE BREAST-FEEDING RIGHTS FOR WORKING MOTHERS

SACRAMENTO—Assembly Member Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles), today introduced Assembly Bill 513, which would require HMOs and insurers to provide coverage for access to certified lactation consultants for new mothers needing help breast-feeding, and to cover the cost of breast pumps to help mothers continue breast-feeding after returning to work. A second piece of legislation, AB 514 would guarantee break time every four hours for working moms to express breast milk during the work day.

"All the studies show that breast-feeding makes for healthier children and moms, as well as increased worker productivity and lower health care costs to employers and the state," said Assembly Member De León. "We need to tear down the significant barriers that keep working women, particularly poor women, from continuing to breast-feed after they go back to work. Women shouldn't have to choose between earning a living and breast-feeding their children."

The Surgeon General, American Academy of Pediatrics and the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force all recommend that babies drink breast milk exclusively for the first six months of life. Exclusive breast-feeding for three months has been shown to reduce health care costs for infants in the first year of life alone by up to \$475, compared to non-breast fed infants. According to the Center For Disease Control, breastfeeding also offers protective health benefits to mothers, including reduced risk for type 2 diabetes, and breast and ovarian cancer.

"87% of women in California begin breastfeeding their babies in the hospital. However many women quit breastfeeding after only a few days or weeks, or begin to unnecessarily supplement with formula." Karen Farley, Policy Advocate for the California WIC Association. "More babies would breastfeed longer and exclusively if women had more readily accessible and quality support for breastfeeding. This bill is an important step in providing women with the resources and time needed to breastfeed their newborns."

Assembly Bill 513 would require health care service plans and health insurers to include coverage for lactation consultation as part of their health care coverage for new mothers, and for the rental of breast pumps, which is often essential for mothers who want to continue breast-feeding their baby after returning to work.

Assembly Bill 1025, enacted in 2001, stated breast-feeding mothers should be provided a reasonable amount of unpaid break time and a sanitary place to express breast milk. AB 514 would build upon that measure by specifically guaranteeing that women have at least one paid break every four hours to express breast milk so they can maintain their ability to breast-feed their babies.

AB 513 is sponsored by the California WIC Association and supported by California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Maternal and Child Health Access, Prevention Institute-Strategic Alliance, and many other women and children advocacy groups.

AB 513 will be reviewed in the Assembly Health Committee and AB 514 will be reviewed in the Assembly Labor Committee in the spring.

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Capitol Office: State Capitol, P.O. Box 942849 • Sacramento, CA 94249-0045 • (916) 319-2045 • Fax: (916) 319-2145
E-Mail: asm.ca.gov/deleon
45th Assembly District Web Site: <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a45>